



Regional Learning & Advocacy Programme for Vulnerable Dryland Communities

DRAFT GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY LINKED EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS IN THE DRYLANDS OF THE HORN OF AFRICA¹

Malika Ogwang, Early Warning Specialist, ACTED Uganda, June 2011

INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, ACTED has been supporting the design, implementation, running and improvement of a Drought Early Warning System (EWS) in Karamoja. This system consists in monitoring 26 indicators on a monthly basis, 19 of them collected by community members and from the community (households, kraals, markets). The analysis of the indicators is done at district level and feedback on the conclusions drawn by the district heads of department is disseminated at international/national and local level. ACTED and the districts authorities of Karamoja are currently building a system of SMS and radio messages for wide dissemination of warnings and recommendations to the communities. A component of community awareness has been put in place and aims at enhancing the understanding and participation of the community in this system. This is achieved through community meetings, drama, songs etc. Thanks to the National Disaster Management Policy newly approved by the Government of Uganda, the resources available at district level for DRR are expected to grow and this system will hopefully be entirely run by the local government and communities in the mid-term.

This system can be called “Community Linked EWS” because of the way it has been designed, involving both and fully the local authorities and local communities from the beginning to the end of the process. Decision making power remains more at district level, as compared with the “Community Based EWS”, where collection of data, analysis and use is at the community level. These two systems can be considered as complementary. The Community Linked EWS has been chosen by the local and national government as being the most adapted to the context of Uganda/Karamoja, and having the higher chance of efficiency and sustainability. Indeed this project started when the population and the districts still had limited knowledge on DRR and at that time a Community Based EWS would have lacked support from the districts. This Community Linked EWS participated in building knowledge at all levels and interaction between the

¹ These good practice principles were drawn up/reviewed during an ECHO DCM partners meeting in ILRI, Addis Ababa in May 2011



communities and the districts. Thanks to this project and to other ongoing Community Managed DRR activities, the communities seem more ready to start developing CBEWS as a complement to the CLEWS.

ACTED has been able to identify a number of lessons learnt/good practice principles so far, that require further refinement and verification following review of other similar experiences:

LESSONS LEARNT/GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

1. Local authorities tend to push for the adoption of a wide range of indicators which requires a lot of resources (in terms of data collection and analysis) and can sometimes confuse the analysis. A shorter list of indicators which can be easily collected and analysed is more efficient and reliable.
2. A few indicators might be found very relevant for the system but if their monitoring is not realistic, a proxy can be used or it should be dropped.
3. Sampling a small and representative number of sentinel sites rather than a large number of sites helps to achieve better quality data and can enhance the capacity building of the data collectors in the long term.
4. When implementing an EWS in a wide area (region), being innovative and using new technologies helps in the production of timely warnings.
5. Using technology is also a way to enhance the motivation and dedication of the actors involved in the system.
6. Building a culture of resilience at local level takes time, and the establishment of a EWS integrated into the local government and communities is part of this process.
7. Involving and training the communities from the very beginning of the project is essential for accuracy of the data, relevancy and sustainability of the system.
8. Data quality control system should be designed and implemented concurrently with the design and implementation of the data collection system.
9. A system cannot be fully operational and reach the maximum efficiency without historical/baseline data
10. The activities and running cost of the system should be integrated into the work plan and annual budget of the local government so as to ensure sustainability of the EWS.



RECOMMENDATIONS SO FAR:

1. Do not be too ambitious. Consider the level of resources available within the communities and local government from the beginning of the project and build up on this.
2. Use existing chain of communication for flow of data and warning messages
3. Involve all levels (communities, local, national) and all sectors so as to create a demand and ensure that all actors of the EWS are accountable for playing their key role leading to the production and dissemination of timely warning messages.
4. Roles and responsibilities of each actor should be very clearly defined.
5. As many synergies as possible should be built with the existing DRR mechanisms so as to make sure that the EWS is well integrated into it and therefore used by other the stakeholders.
6. The analysis done should be harmonized, as much as possible, with other risk analysis systems so as to be able to compare results.
7. Building partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including private and governmental institutions is essential to enhance the efficiency of the system.

This system can be fully sustainable if the national government puts in place a structure at local level which considers the necessary human resources to ensure monitoring of the data collection, analysis of the data, production and dissemination of the monthly Drought Bulletin. Though the cost and time required by these activities are minimal, it is essential that one district officer per district dedicates the first and last weeks of each month to this system, to ensure that sufficient time is allocated and the EWS is disseminated on time.

Please send comments/suggestions on this document and relevant good practice experiences/studies to: Malika Ogwang at malika.ogwang@acted.org and Vanessa Tilstone vtilstone@oxfam.org.uk



The project is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO)

Copies of this documented can be accessed on the DRR website

<http://www.disasterriskreduction.net/east-central-africa/library/?querystring=reglap>

